

# ELIZABETH GASKELL

---

John McVeagh

ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:  
THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL



ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:  
THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

---

Volume 26

ELIZABETH GASKELL

---

*Page Intentionally Left Blank*

# ELIZABETH GASKELL

JOHN MCVEAGH

First published in 1970 by Routledge & Kegan Paul

This edition first published in 2016

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 1970 John McVeagh

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-138-67777-7 (Set)

ISBN: 978-1-315-55928-5 (Set) (ebk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-67411-0 (Volume 26) (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-56145-5 (Volume 26) (ebk)

#### **Publisher's Note**

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.

#### **Disclaimer**

The publisher has made every effort to trace copyright holders and would welcome correspondence from those they have been unable to trace.

# ***Elizabeth Gaskell***

*by John McVeagh*



LONDON

**ROUTLEDGE & KEGAN PAUL**

NEW YORK: HUMANITIES PRESS

*First published 1970  
by Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd  
Broadway House, 68-74 Carter Lane  
London, E.C.4*

*Printed in Great Britain  
by Northumberland Press Limited  
Gateshead*

*© John McVeagh 1970  
No part of this book may be reproduced  
in any form without permission from  
the publisher, except for the quotation  
of brief passages in criticism  
SBN 7100 6650 3 (c)  
SBN 7100 6651 1 (p)*

## ***Table of important dates***

- 1810 Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson born in Chelsea.
- 1811 Removal to Knutsford after mother's death.
- 1822-3 School at Avonbank, Stratford-on-Avon.
- 1827 Leaves Avonbank.
- 1832 Marries William Gaskell. Removal to Manchester.
- 1845 Death of son, William. Begins writing.
- 1848 *Mary Barton* published.
- 1853 *Cranford* and *Ruth* published. Furore over latter prostrates author.
- 1855 *North and South* published.
- 1857 *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* published. Visit to Italy.
- 1863 *Sylvia's Lovers* and *Cousin Phillis* published.
- 1865 Death. *Wives and Daughters* left unfinished.



*Page Intentionally Left Blank*

# Contents

TABLE OF IMPORTANT DATES	vi
PRELIMINARY REMARKS	I
PLAN OF ANALYSIS	9
NOVELS OF SOCIAL CRITICISM	IO
1 <i>Mary Barton</i> , ch. 6	IO
2 <i>Mary Barton</i> , ch. IO	II
3 <i>North and South</i> , ch. 17	13
4 <i>North and South</i> , ch. 20	16
5 <i>North and South</i> , ch. 40	18
6 <i>Mary Barton</i> , ch. 37	19
7 <i>Ruth</i> , ch. 22	21
8 <i>Ruth</i> , ch. 32	23
 'THE LIFE OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË'	 25
9 <i>The Life of Charlotte Brontë</i> , ch. 2	25
IO <i>The Life of Charlotte Brontë</i> , ch. 17	27
II <i>The Life of Charlotte Brontë</i> , ch. 28	29
12 <i>The Life of Charlotte Brontë</i> , ch. 12	31
13 <i>The Life of Charlotte Brontë</i> , ch. 19	32
 NOVELS OF COUNTRY LIFE	 34
14 <i>Ruth</i> , ch. 12	34
15 <i>Ruth</i> , ch. 13	35
16 <i>Cranford</i> , ch. 1	37
17 <i>My Lady Ludlow</i> , ch. 14	40
18 <i>Cousin Phillis</i> , part III	43
19 <i>Wives and Daughters</i> , ch. 6	45
20 <i>Sylvia's Lovers</i> , ch. 28	47
	vii

## CONTENTS

THE CHALLENGE OF LIFE	51
21 <i>Mary Barton</i> , ch. 3	52
22 <i>Sylvia's Lovers</i> , ch. 30	54
23 <i>Cranford</i> , ch. 14	56
24 <i>Wives and Daughters</i> , ch. 10	57
25 <i>The Life of Charlotte Brontë</i> , ch. 16	59
THE HUMAN RESPONSE	61
26 <i>Mary Barton</i> , ch. 34	61
27 <i>Mary Barton</i> , ch. 37	62
28 <i>North and South</i> , ch. 46	65
29 <i>Wives and Daughters</i> , ch. 44	67
30 <i>Sylvia's Lovers</i> , ch. 45	69
NARRATIVE MANNER	72
31 <i>The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell</i> , pp. 540-2	73
32 <i>Mary Barton</i> , ch. 1	76
33 <i>Sylvia's Lovers</i> , ch. 9	77
34 <i>Mary Barton</i> , ch. 6	79
35 <i>Mary Barton</i> , ch. 6	80
36 <i>North and South</i> , ch. 17	82
37 <i>Wives and Daughters</i> , ch. 45	85
38 <i>Ruth</i> , ch. 19	89
LIMITATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENT	91
39 <i>Sylvia's Lovers</i> , ch. 12	93
40 <i>Wives and Daughters</i> , ch. 23	96
41 <i>Mary Barton</i> , ch. 20	100
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	103

## ***Preliminary remarks***

Mrs. Gaskell holds a secure and merited place among the novelists of the nineteenth century. Her novels, written in the early years of the Victorian period (from 1848 to 1865), offer us a record of certain aspects of the daily life of her time which, in its observed detail and clear vision, is recognizably and uniquely hers, distinguishable from the novels of her contemporaries by its firmness, honesty and lack of distortion. Her material is the ordinary life of the time, her characters normal and typical nineteenth-century individuals—the factory hand, the doctor's daughter, the farmer, the manufacturer; she is interested in them as individuals, and the main content of each novel is simply the description and exploration of the texture and feel, pressures and demands of their day-to-day existence. She is therefore a writer worthy of study in that her novels reflect the moods and problems of her society, or that part of society which she knew well, with the minimum of distortion or exaggeration; as if it was her aim to portray in fiction precisely what it felt like to live in the England of the early and middle nineteenth century. She avoids the extraordinary, the sensational and the false as a general rule, dealing rather with real problems, ordinary people, likely situations; her presentation is matter-of-fact, her